

TOP CIA SPY IN ITALY YANKED FOR POPE PROBE 'SABOTAGE'

By NILES LATHEM
Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON — An angry CIA Director William Casey has removed the agency's top spy in Italy for trying to sabotage the Italian investigation into Soviet bloc links to the plot to kill the Pope. The Post has learned.

Senior U.S. intelligence and Congressional sources said last night that Casey decided this month to replace the CIA station chief in Rome in

the wake of the Italian prosecutor's report, which provided evidence of a Bulgarian connection to the assassination attempt.

Sources said that Casey was "embarrassed" by the revelations from Italy — because reports coming from his own field agents argued against Bulgarian involvement in the assassination attempt.

The removal of the station chief, whose name

cannot be revealed because of new laws prohibiting the disclosure of identities of U.S. agents overseas, is part of a massive shakeup under way at the CIA.

Casey, sources say, believes there are too many "liberals" in key positions in the agency, who are putting roadblocks in many operations — including the "contra" operation in Nicaragua.

Earlier this week five top agency officials in-

cluding the CIA's chief Congressional lobbyist and the head of clandestine operations were replaced and given new jobs because of the failure of Congress to renew funding for Nicaragua.

For the last two years the entire Reagan administration has been virtually silent on allegations that the plot to kill the pontiff was hatched in the Soviet Union and planned by the Bulgarian Secret Service.

That is because the CIA has consistently thrown cold water on the allegations and according to some reports went out of its way to derail the Italian investigation.

But in the wake of the Italian prosecutor's report, which concluded that there was detailed evidence that Turkish gunman Mehmet Ali Agca was hired by the Bulgarians, Casey became enraged and transferred the CIA station chief.

Sen. Alfonse D'Amato, a fellow Long Island Republican, had repeatedly complained to Casey about the station chief's "sabotage" of the investigation and charged that other agency officials in Italy were planting "disinformation" in the Western press to derail the Italian probe.

It is unclear what effect D'Amato's complaints had on Casey and the New York Republican was not immediately available for comment last night.



WILLIAM CASEY
"Embarrassed."